# The Master of Craven

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## SYNOPSIS.

Basil Tempest, world's greatest poet and novelist, refusing further to be lionized, shuts himself up in Craven, his country home. His gloomy meditations are broken by the admission of an American, Lucy Carew, who has come to England to get a study of the author, but more especially a synopsis of his new suite of poems. Tempest, angry at being disturbed, declares he will write no more and rudely asks her to go. Repenting of his rudeness he apologizes and offers to dictate to Lucy, who sits spellbound as she writes. Tempest induces Lucy to remain and read her manuscript to him. Their interest in one another grows. Tempest burns the photographs and letters of Lady Ormond, with whom his name has been associated. He takes great pleasure in Lucy's presence, as their work progresses.

### CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"Oh, sir," she palliated, "I thought no wrong, sir—for her or you."

"Well, well," he waived, and said significantly, "for me there's no good in the world."

The old woman's hands were clased over her knitting-work, her wedding-ring fine and yellow on her finger—he had seen the ring grow thin with the years. His eyes were on it.

"But there are good things, sir," she whispered, softly, "a wife and children."

He laughed, not pleasantly.

"You must renounce your fairy-tales. The only ones that are left are gruesome—tales with which to frighten children."

He frowned and covered his face with his hand; a fine hand, strong and slender, nothing effeminate about it, albeit with the oval nails and psychic finger-tips of the poet.

He recovered himself: "To return to what I came to say—Miss Carew must leave Craven."

"Yes, Mr. Tempest."

"I shall never send her, I shall never show her, let her dream I wish it, because," his eyes flashed at ahe old, anxious face, "I wish nothing less—nothing less—in the world. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Mr. Basil."

"She must not come to-morrow—nor again."

As he threw back his head the shadows on his face appeared to creep from his melancholy eyes and brood over all his features. The spirits of the night and darkness had banded together to cast their baleful wings over him.

"She must not come again."

"No, Mr. Basil."

"I cannot bear it."

She understood him and sat silent, her tenderness and pity fixed on his bowed, brooding figure. As her eyes met his he again covered his over with his too frequent gesture and exclaimed:

"Fire, coals of live flames heated red hot and on each lid. What is this cursed malady that is destroying me? God! to be blind—blind—with the love of beauty so knit in me that it is one with my life! To give up all the images of the world, the forms of life, the colors that plant the aspect of the universe—to go into this self. this dark, gloomy prison of myself with memories none too glad—or brave or good, be sure! To live with the ghouls of the mind—the angels of light all banished. Never to write again, never to create, because my selfish misery is too great; because I am sapped by revolt and not to be reconciled. Why, to-night I can scarcely see you, and there have been days when I would have torn my eyes open to see her more plainly! To potter around the earth I have been so vain as to think I trod well, to fumble for a chair, to fall instead of walking, to feel my way who have broken it through!

"You have watched the malady come to me, Henly, as you watched it come to my father. You have understood. You have seen me suffer, and I knew you wondered at my control when within I have shrieked with agony." He paused, then said significantly: "But there is oblivion."

In his anguish his eyes showed blood-red, as if horribly suffused with drops of a supreme Gethsemane. The old woman's face was sublime in tenderness; her tears were flowing freely.

"And I have dared for a moment to think of happiness!" he breathed. "I have dreamed of a love strong enough to go with me into that deadly darkness—the inferno. But it's madness! madness! I have proved it. It does not exist, and God knows I will protect myself from suffering any more deeply than now I do. But, as I said, there is oblivion—look here." Tempest unfastened his cuff and rolled up his sleeves to his inner arm.

The old housekeeper gave a cry, the tears froze on her lids. She sprang to her feet and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Ah—no!" she cried in a stifled voice: "No—no, Mr. Basil!"

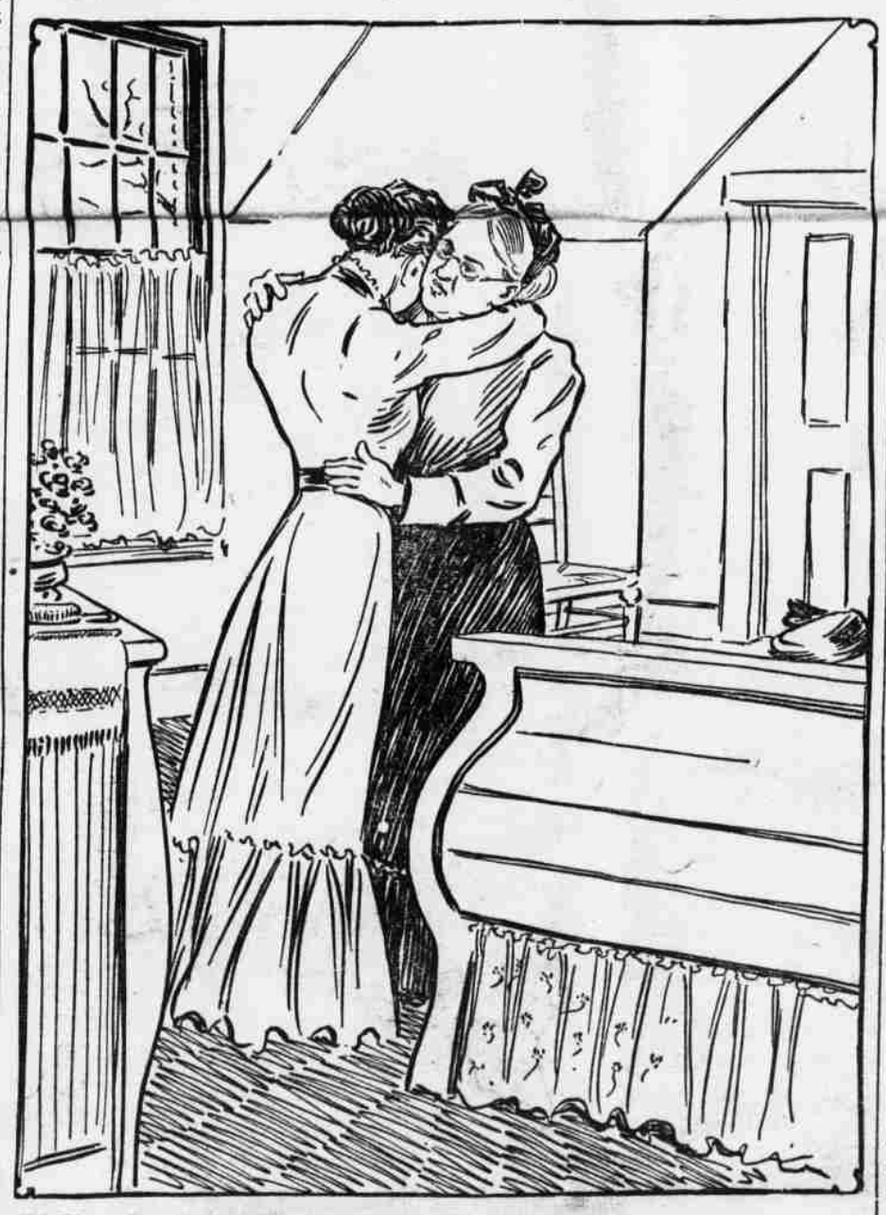
"Hush," he commanded her sternly.

And she knew him too well to burst forth into the grief her heart contained. Tempest in his tone alone had become the master who, although he had given his confidence, admitted no familiarity, however dear. The housekeeper trembled as she stood, and Tempest was the controlled one. He said presently:

"You'll find some means to see Miss Carew and to tell her whatever you like. You will prevent her coming. As for me"—he shrugged—"I am incapable of any further strength in the matter. I couldn't be expected to turn voluntarily from Heaven to Hades." He smiled his peculiarly sweet, gentle smile and rose to go.

Mrs. Henly followed him to the door. When he had left her she fell upon her knees by the little chair he had used to sit in as a child, and wept for him and prayed for him and determined that if there were hope on the earth to rescue him, he should be rescued.

It did not call for an astute character reader to remark the change in



"If There Was Only Some Heart That Could Care for Him Enough, Some Hand That Could Guide Him."

Mrs. Ramsdill's guest. The fine country air of ——shire had failed to freshen or keep the original roses in her cheeks. Her walks to and from the castle did not stimulate her appetite. She was extremely altered, and the little woman tempted her with the best of her homely kitchen fare in vain.

Polly Ramsdill welcomed the unusual visit of Mr. Tempest's housekeeper with great deference and relief and a burning curiosity to speak of the guest.

Mrs. Henly in rigid black silk with a fetching little close bonnet whose purple strings were tied under her chin had chosen to draw a veil down over her countenance, whose natural serenity was much disturbed. The veil was mottled a little, for even on the way from Craven she had cried through it.

"The young lady's hin—just hin from walkin'." Polly dusted a spotless chair and stood alongside of it hopefully—not venturing to suggest that Mrs. Henly linger, but longing for it. "She's never still, 'm; I do think she walks her flesh off her and her colors as well."

"You think she is poorly, Polly?"

"Well, 'm," coughed Mrs. Ramsdill, "there's some as never does well out of their natural hair; if it were a vegetubble, I'd say it were witherin'; if it were a child I'd say it were pinin'."

Miss Carew would see Mrs. Henly, who went up at once to the room in the eaves.

The American was before the bit of mirror that reflected sky and meadow and her own changed face. Like the Lady of Shalot, she had seen strange things pass in the little glass. She stood with her hat in her hand, for she had just come in. Her hair unconfined, seen for the first by Mrs. Henly, wakened her admiration.

"What lovely hair, miss, and such a lot of it!"

Polly was right—the stranger's color was gone; tired as she had been the day of her arrival at Craven, she had looked the picture of vigorous health.

"You're not looking as well as when you came to England, miss."

Miss Carew was well, it seemed—perfectly; she thanked Mrs. Henly.

"But it's no wonder; you're feelin' the long, close writin' I daresay."

Mrs. Henly paused, surprised to find that for the first she thought of the girl. She was young and vigorous, but what health and vitality, what strength of body and mind, and what divine patience were needed for the task Mrs. Henly purposed for the slender creature! But she did not think twice of it. Love—that was all the strength needed if she had it—if not? ah, her poor, blighted boy!

She felt instinctive ease with Miss Carew, in whose presence she had found herself only a few times before. The nature of the stranger, although an unknown quantity, was sympathetic.

The old lady sat down beside Miss Carew on the little bed. She lifted her mottled veil and revealed her disturbed face and tear-reddened eyes. She put out her hands before her in an old-fashioned gesture of despair, gave a choked sob, and murmured whilst her eyes streamed over:

"Oh, miss, what a terribly cruel world it is, indeed; what a hodd, cruel world!"

As this, to them both, was far too

"The day I let you in, miss—I see now that I took it on myself, so to say. I sha'n't forget how you stood there wet and cold like a child lost in a storm—you was so eager, too, and your eyes was so bright, and you says so determinedly: 'I must see Mr. Tempest.' Do you remember?"

How she had ever been that enterprising, practical, bold invader Miss Carew was so far from being able to recall that the story did not sound to her like her own.

"And I had just left him a half hour before shut up in that drearsome room with his books, which he wouldn't read, or his papers, which he swore he would never touch again. Why, miss, you made me think somehow that night as you came in of the stories I used to tell him when he was a boy—the fairy-tales—and you gave me the feeling of hoddness as if you just dropped in with the rain and was some kind of a bewitchment." Her mingled figures were not unpicturesque and the listener did not smile as she thought with a thrill of what Tempest had himself said.

"And I determined to send you to him, miss. I said: 'Harm him it can't, and anything is better than to see him so;' so while you were thankin' me for being so kind to you, miss, I was thinkin' only of him, I'm afraid—what I shall always be doing to the last."

Lucy Carew could not question her. She felt no wish to do so—she had a dread of what message the woman had come to bring. She was speeding towards some point, and the girl sat patiently before the emotion and the love that struggled in the wrinkled old face; but as again Mrs. Henly's appealing eyes met hers she murmured:

"Do you regret it, Mrs. Henly—letting me in?"

"Regret it, my dear!" exclaimed the other. "Ah, I don't know! If it's for always, I am heart glad; if it's to make him grieve and suffer more, I shall never, never forgive myself. If there was only some heart that could care for him enough, some hand he would love that could guide him—but to see him!" She wrung her hands and heard Miss Carew say in a voice that sounded hard because of the speaker's control:

"Don't, Mrs. Henly, tell me any more, please. I would rather not hear."

The old woman ceased, wiped her eyes, and sighed.

"Does Mr. Tempest know you came to me, Mr. Henly?"

"Oh, dear—he bade me come."

"He bade you come."

"Yes, miss."

"To do what?—to tell me what?"

"I can't ever tell you, miss."

Miss Carew had taken her companion's hands—her breast heaved with surprise and a sort of terror.

"You must tell me. Mr. Tempest sent you to me for what?"

"But you forbade me to speak, Miss Carew!"

"Of his illness—yes—but what does he wish me to do?"

Seeking to evade disloyalty, and, nevertheless, to accomplish her desired end, Mrs. Henly repeated:

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Diving Extraordinary.

Italy is nothing if not artistic, so even in their swimming contests art finds a place, in addition to the ordinary acrobatic feats and the tests of endurance.

In Rome during a series of aquatic sports on the Tiber couples and groups in fantastic costumes would appear on the banks and plunge into the river in all sorts of attitudes, but the one thing that was most admired and applauded was the flying Mercury.

One of the members of the Roman Swimming club had apparently borrowed all the attributes of this messenger of the gods, his winged hat and sandals and the caducens, and when, carefully posed, he jumped into the Tiber, it seemed, the spectators said, as if it were really the Mercury of Giovanni da Bologna, who had come up to participate in the water sports of modern Italy.

### Thieves Who Are "Experts."

There are thieves who are experts in the articles which they "collect." Five years ago there was a series of daring robberies in Queen's gate and Grosvenor gardens. Over thirty houses were entered. In every case nothing was taken except two or three small articles, but these were always the very best in the house. No connoisseur could possibly have chosen better than this nocturnal adventurer. What is more, nothing of his plunder was ever marketed in England. It is believed that he stored the whole lot and took it to America, where no doubt it realized big prices.

### Seemingly Wise Provision.

"It's a good thing," says the Philosopher of Folly, "that canvas costs more than paper. Otherwise there would be as many rank painters as there are putrid poets."

### Good Practice.

Even when a woman is talking to man over the telephone she takes a graceful pose so he can admire her figure.—New York Press.



### Critics and Managers Clash.

Between the whole press of Copenhagen and all the theatrical managers a curious contest has started because the managers want to compel the critics to write only favorable notices. The contest began when the board of theatrical managers forbade the admission of one critic representing a special theatrical paper.



### Anything in a Name?

"Say, pa?"

"What is it?"

"Can a rear admiral go to the front?"—Judge.



### Blessed Are They That Want Little.

Those who want fewest things are nearest to the gods.—Diogenes.



The woman who loses her hearing may be thankful it wasn't her voice.



A wolf in sheep's clothing sometimes gets fleeced just the same.



A good many things are important, if true.